CIVIC CLARITY FOUNDATION
FONDATION POUR LA CLARTÉ CIVIQUE

November 10th, 2025

The Honourable Doug Ford
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

The Honourable Paul Calandra
Minister of Education
5th Floor, 438 University Ave.
Toronto, ON M7A 2A5

**An Urgent Appeal Against the Top-down Nature of Bill 33**

Dear Premier Ford and Minister Calandra,

On behalf of students and youth across Ontario, the Civic Clarity Foundation is writing to express our opposition to the vision for student well-being and education enshrined in Bill 33. While framed as an act to support children, this legislation represents a concerning consolidation of top-down power that threatens our school system's democratic principles and ignores evidence-based solutions for student well-being.

At its core, Bill 33 is a blueprint for top-down governance. It grants the Ministry of Education unprecedented power and authority to intervene in locally elected school boards, a cornerstone of democracy in Ontario for over a century. We have already seen a preview of this future. Your ministerial directive in August, forcing school boards to promote the very School Resource Officer (SRO) programs this bill seeks to mandate is a clear example of centralized control overriding local autonomy and expert consensus.

Years of advocacy resulted in the removal of these programs from our largest school boards. Research and lived experience have demonstrated that a permanent police presence in schools does not increase safety but instead contributes to a climate of surveillance and criminalization. What we must ask ourselves is about the kind of culture and environment we want to create in our schools.

The alternative to the centralized, enforcement-first model of Bill 33 is a smarter, more effective framework built on transparency, accountability, and empowerment. This includes:

**1. Mandated Professional Standards and Caseload Transparency:** In place of Bill 33's focus on enforcement, we must invest in our support staff. This begins by establishing clear, province-wide standards for the role of in-school mental health professionals to define their core duties. Crucially, we must require school boards to annually track and publicly report on the workload of these professionals, differentiating between direct student counselling, preventative programming, and administrative tasks. This data would then work to inform caseload management plans.

**2. Commit to Public Data and Accountability:** Instead of the vague ministerial oversight outlined in Bill 33, meaningful oversight is impossible without transparent data. We call for the Ministry of Education, in consultation with the Ministry of Health, to be required to publish a comprehensive annual report on youth mental health in schools, tabled in the legislature. This report must include board-level data on key indicators such as professional-to-student ratios, workload allocations, and service usage, creating an essential new standard for public accountability.

**3. Formally Empower Student Voice in Governance:** Where Bill 33 consolidates power in the Minister's office, our approach formally empowers the student voice in governance to ensure policies are grounded in lived reality. We propose formally recognizing student trustees as the designated representative voice of the student body (board-to-board basis) on matters of mental health and student well-being. This must be supported by a mandated, formal consultation process that provides student trustees with all relevant information, ensures dedicated public meetings on student well-being, and requires every school board to provide a formal response to recommendations tabled by students.

Let us be clear: this is not an argument for being 'soft' on safety. It is an argument for being smart on safety. Our recommendations are derived from our foundation's cross-partisan research into youth mental health & the role of good governance, and we have identified Bill 33 as a fundamental mismatch with those principles. Of course, serious criminal acts require an immediate and professional response from law enforcement. However, Bill 33 makes the error of conflating school discipline and crisis with criminal matters. Our approach focuses on proactive, preventative, and evidence-based measures to create a school environment built on prevention, not reaction.

Sincerely,

Rehan Mazid
Executive Director
Civic Clarity Foundation

Kinjal Kaur
Director of Community Engagement, Civic Clarity Foundation
Student Trustee, Waterloo Region District School Board